

For Immediate Release:

Canadian Agri-Retailers Propose Crop Input Security Protocol

Industry urges federal government to cost share on plan to upgrade security at agri-business sites to protect Canadians and the nation's food supply

Winnipeg, Mb. May 29th, 2009 – Agri-retailers are the primary suppliers to Canadian farmers of important agricultural products that are essential for modern crop production. Unfortunately, in the wrong hands, some of these products can be used for harmful and destructive purposes. Agricultural fertilizers and chemicals are often misappropriated by terrorists and criminals who seek to use them as weapons or for illicit drug production. Consequently, Agri-retailers that undertake the marketing and stewardship of crop inputs are at a high risk of being targeted by these sinister elements and urgently call on the federal government to assist them with securing agricultural facilities in the interest of public safety and the protection of our nation's food supply.

“Canadian agri-retailers are prepared to do their part but should not be expected to shoulder the entire burden of shielding the sector from terrorist penetration,” said David MacKay, Executive Director of the Canadian Association of Agri-Retailers (CAAR). “Public safety is a primary responsibility of the federal government and we need their help to secure the products that are critical to Canada's agricultural economy.”

MacKay also points to the fact that their U.S. retail counterparts already benefit from access to enhanced tax credits and grants for security upgrades at agri-business facilities including perimeter fencing, computer access controls, video surveillance and security lighting. “Agriculture is a global market and Canadian producers now find themselves at a competitive disadvantage because they must pick up the tab for security costs that have nothing to do with crop production.”

Echoing the concern, Canadian farmers also support the call for a government sponsored security protocol for crop inputs. “Forcing the agri-retail sector to bear the incremental costs of security upgrades will result in upward pressure on input prices which inevitably must be paid for at the farm gate – something that will not sit well with grain, pulse and oilseed farmers,” said Richard Phillips, Executive Director of Grain Growers of Canada (GGC). “Our government needs to help protect Canada's investment in agriculture by ensuring we remain globally competitive.”

CAAR efforts proposing to partner with government on a comprehensive security protocol have won tremendous support among individual Members of Parliament including formal recommendations by a House and Senate Standing Committee but have yet to receive the blessing of the Prime Minister or his Cabinet.

A cursory review of previous federal initiatives reveals ample precedence for government investment in security infrastructure for key industries including the Marine Security Contribution Program for Canadian ports and the recently earmarked \$350 Million to boost security at major airports.

“When it comes to security, you have to be careful that you don’t lock the doors while leaving the windows open. And with the U.S. securing its agri-retail facilities Canada may be exposed as the weak link in terms of implementing common-sense anti-terrorist measures,” explains MacKay. “By regulation or best practice, there is a cost to protecting our citizens and our food supply. Government has a stake in that objective and should therefore share in the investment. For the sake of all Canadians, we can not afford to ignore this issue.”

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CAAR is a not-for-profit industry association serving approximately 1000 agri-retail members across Canada and acts as the voice of the sector which is responsible for marketing nearly \$ 10 Billion in crop inputs, equipment and services to Canadian farmers. The CAAR office is located in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

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